

FROM THE OUTSIDE IN



A perspective on the iGaming Sector and what attracts people to join.

OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS, the iGaming sector has gone from relative obscurity to become an industry that is placed firmly in the public consciousness. Internationally, the use of sponsorship has given operators the chance to get their brand in front of the sports fan via a football team's shirt or a racing car's livery, and the use of PR has kept the rise of publicly listed operators firmly on the business pages of any newspaper. Online advertising and affiliate marketing has given operators a channel through which they are able to touch the Internet user, and event marketing has allowed companies to promote their brand on a regional basis, as well as nationally.

While some may have seen the transformation coming, nowhere has it been as evident as in the UK, where the recent Gambling Act has resulted in billboards and buses across the country being adorned with ads, and TV commercials filling the airways.

MISTAKING IDENTITY

Despite this, it is evident that the public perception of the iGaming industry and the nature of the companies that operate within, is sketchy at best and at worst, completely mistaken. Apart from those that have an interest in the sector as a pastime, whether it be through sportsbetting, poker or another activity, there are few outside the sector that have a good understanding of what a gaming operator does and the approach they adopt.

So what do prospective employees think of the sector when they consider joining, and what attracts someone to the sector in the first place? As someone who has recently moved from a role in the financial sector into one at a company operating and consulting within iGaming, I feel in a position to explore this idea further.

One of the first things that struck me when initially investigating the industry was its size. Having had the occasional flutter before, I was aware of some of the household names but could not have imagined the sheer number of companies thriving in the sector, nor the variety of products available, be it within sportsbetting, casino or soft gaming. This, combined with the range of different

organisations vending into the sector, including software suppliers, marketing service providers and payment service providers, has resulted in an incredible range of companies working within their own niche market.

This theme continues when one considers individual companies. In my financial background related naivety, I assumed that once a website had been constructed, that was pretty much it. Upon joining the sector however, I was interested to learn of the number of different roles and departments that exist behind the scenes. Whereas I had previously thought that a site was maintained by just a few IT professionals, to find the variety of disciplines that contribute towards the smooth running of an operator was surprising, particularly when one considers how new many of the disciplines themselves are.

Despite only emerging in the mid 1990s, the web has developed like no other media form. Many of the disciplines unique to companies operating in the online space did not exist before its emergence and have not taken any organised form for more than 10 years. This, allied with the speed at which the disciplines have developed, does seem to have had a major impact on the demographic profile of those that work within iGaming.

The nature of the sector has meant that there has been a great deal of opportunity for those that have been able to demonstrate their talent and competence over the short term. Upon joining the sector, it was a real culture shock to find so many senior managers in their late 20s and early 30s, as opposed to the financial industry where there is an

emphasis on serving your time before you are able to progress to more senior positions.

MATURITY

While it could be said that this is not a trend peculiar to iGaming as opposed to any other online or e-Commerce sector, iGaming's emergence in the post dot.com boom period in the initial years of the 21st century, alongside the incredible growth the sector has experienced, has only exacerbated the phenomenon.

The rapid development of the industry, combined with the ever changing legislative environment in which it exists, and the comparative youth of many of those who control it, has induced a distinctly entrepreneurial spirit where diversification, adaptability and speed of change are actively encouraged.

There are signs that the industry is moving on from its embryonic phase and becoming a more mature one. Companies that once lived by the adage 'you have to speculate to accumulate' and may have simply been successful because they were first in the space, are now increasingly focusing on becoming more structured and process driven.

The industry is serious and it means business, but in aiming to provide an entertaining service for consumers, it provides an entertaining environment for its workforce. Despite its changes, the fact remains that this is still an industry full of opportunity and promise for those that have the determination to make it happen. That's what made me want to be a part of it. ■

AUTHORPROFILE



Richard Rowlands, iGaming Academy. Having completed a BSc Hons degree at Swansea University, Richard spent 9 years working for LloydsTSB in the share registration and employee benefits industry. This involved a number of operational roles before moving into customer relationships and business development. Richard

has a wealth of experience in account managing and selling a variety of products and services to many of the largest FTSE 100 companies at senior management and board level. Outside work, Richard enjoys a wide range of sports and is a very keen golfer. Richard joined the iGaming Academy in June 2008 to drive the sales of all iGA product offerings to the global marketplace, based out of the Pentasia UK head office in Redhill, Surrey.